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Soviet-American relations: a multiple symmetry model¹

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Escalation, deterrence, fear of "gaps," reduction of tensions, balance of terror . . . these expressions, describing processes and attitudes which were largely unknown fifteen years ago, are becoming clichés today. The context is the Cold War, but the issue is the potentially hot thermonuclear war which "will destroy us unless we do something about it." Disagreement on the "us" that will be destroyed has been less acute than disagreement on who the "we" are and what the "something" is that must be done. Who are, or ought to be, the "we" and what is, or ought to be, that "something"? In this paper we would like to offer a fresh perspective for assessing these concerns.

I. Dupréel's Theorem

In 1948, Professor Eugène Dupréel of the University of Brussels published a lengthy study of *General Sociology* (1948; cf. Scott, 1956, pp. 207-26; Liska, 1957). In a chapter on the "Evolution of Extended

Conflicts" he proposed that, "While the character of aggressor and defender intermingle and merge, the opposing forces tend to balance each other. They take the same forms to meet and neutralize each other more completely" (p. 151). In a protracted conflict, the opponents must employ the same means (*moyens mis en œuvre*); if they do not, that side which fails to modernize these particular means to match those of the other side, other things being equal, is doomed. The moral issue of aggressor versus defender becomes irrelevant and immaterial for the outcome of the conflict, which is maintained or decided by the balance or imbalance of the mutual means.²

¹ A number of friends and colleagues read an earlier draft of this paper. Heinz Eulau and Ole Holsti of Stanford University and Charles A. McClelland of the University of Southern California offered especially valuable comments and suggestions.

² Charles A. McClelland has observed the tendency of nations in conflict to engage in "trade-off sequences" and to develop parallel "counterpart structures" (1961, pp. 182-204). The related concept of "mirror images"—a psychological tendency of opponents in a conflict situation to perceive each other's motives and actions similarly and to be guided in their own actions accordingly—is presented by, *inter alia*, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1961, pp. 45-56). Strategic use of the latter tendency by one party in a conflict situation is explored by Paul Linebarger (1957, pp. 135-42).

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